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UNDER THE TABLE

When I was eight I was assigned a new tutor. His name was Mr. Smart and I liked him right away. It wasn't until several months later that I realized I was also attracted to him. I wasn't quite sure about this so I decided I had to find a way to "prove" it to myself.

My daily hour-long lessons were at a small round gate-legged table in the lounge. I noticed that by about the middle of the lesson I would get an erection (I had no name for this then). I somehow knew at the back of my mind that this had something to do with the proximity of Mr. Smart who was a tall, handsome man of about forty-five. He had large, beautiful hands; he dressed well, usually in a blue blazer, tie and grey flannel slacks. I was interested in his strong thighs and his crotch and I wanted to touch them but I knew that this was somehow "forbidden." I wasn't able to associate the desire to touch with attraction. Sex I knew was something men and women "did," but I was not aware at all that men could, or might want to, have sex with each other.

One morning, I was alone in the lounge. It was several hours before Mr. Smart was due to give me my lesson. I happened to glance at the table where we usually sat. I wondered if the simple act of leaning against the table during my lesson was giving me the erections and the whole thing had nothing to do with Mr. Smart. I climbed onto my chair and leaned against the table: nothing. I pressed myself again and again harder and harder against the edge of the table: still nothing. So it was Mr. Smart after all!

Later in the day when I had my lesson I got the hard-on much sooner than usual. Now that I realized he was the "cause," I became consciously excited by him. That night in bed I stroked my penis while I thought about Mr. Smart. Then I got scared: some sticky white fluid came out of the tip of my penis. I must be ill, I thought. On the other hand, it felt so good. My penis shuddered in an odd way just before the white stuff came out.

The next day I asked my mother if the "sticky white stuff" coming out of my "wee-wee" meant that I was ill. She said that it was normal and offered no other explanation. I was relieved to know I wasn't ill and the next night I repeated the procedure with added enthusiasm.

I now began to let myself fantasize freely about Mr. Smart as I jerked off and each time I got this wonderful, thrilling feeling. From now on I did this every night. Sometimes the white stuff came out, sometimes it didn't. Either way the orgasm (I didn't know there was a name for it then) felt wonderful. One day my mother told me "not to dirty the sheets." "I don't," I protested. "Yes, you do," she replied, blushing and walking away from me awkwardly. Her blush gave me the clue that she must have been referring to the white stuff. White stuff was nice and besides, it was white like the sheets. It seemed to me unjust that getting it on the sheets was wrong when the art of making it felt so good.

Not long after the incident with Mr. Smart and the table, I watched the broadcast of a famous European circus on B.B.C. tv. One of the acts was a pair of jugglers, a husband and wife. The woman was blonde, had very large breasts and wore only a bikini. Her husband, a stocky man of about forty wore a close-fitting sequin jacket and sported an impressive mustache. The day after the show, Mr. Smart asked me whether I had seen the show, and in particular, the jugglers. When I said I had, he exclaimed, "Wasn't the woman in the bikini gorgeous!" "M'm," I replied. I was shocked: to me it was the man who was gorgeous not the woman. On the one hand I was glad now that it was certain I

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preferred men to women; but for the first time, I felt the stab of pain which comes from the recognition of the isolation of being gay in a straight world. I felt betrayed by Mr. Smart's liking the woman. Mr. Smart, it turned out, liked women a little too much. Soon after this, he asked my mother if she would give him painting lessons. He suggested they go painting out of doors in the field next to his house. My mother refused. I asked her why and she said, "I don't think painting is what he has in mind." "What does he have in mind?" I asked. "Well, it isn't painting," she repeated cryptically. It wasn't till I was an undergraduate in University that I realized that Mr. Smart had "designs" on my mother. Not long after I went to University the scandal concerning Mr. Smart broke in local papers. He had been discovered in Upton with a married woman by the woman's husband. What was even worse was that she had been prostituting herself to a number of men, several of whom like Mr. Smart, were pillars of Upton social life. The husband filed for divorce citing Mr. Smart as co-respondent. Poor Mr. Smart who was a fine teacher and as such had an excellent reputation, was fired from his school. His wife left him, his life was in ruins. Eventually, his reputation was restored.

About fifteen years after the scandal, when I was in graduate school at Birmingham University, Mr. Smart asked my mother if he could have a chat with me on one of the days when I came home for the weekend. It was an awkward meeting. He must have known that I knew about the scandal. He looked old and worn. He wasn't very handsome anymore. The stress and age had taken their toll on his features: his face had many fresh wrinkles, he was thinner, he had a stoop and seemed shorter, his hair was grey. I was startled also by his strong Worcestershire accent; in those days, a strong regional accent labeled you working or lower middle class. Somehow because of his aristocratic bearing (as I had remembered it) and the fact that I had worshipped him so much as a child, I expected him to have an upper class or upper middle class accent. Nowadays, I like to think that he might have sought help from a psychotherapist or a twelve-step group for sex addiction, but my mother tells me that compared to this country, England is still in the dark ages as far as psychological help is concerned. This is another main reason I stay in this country. I need all the head shrinkers I can get. The thought of anyone from Upton-on-Severn going to therapy is unthinkable. One's only recourse would be to see an expensive psychiatrist and get put on heavy medication. The very idea of a support group for sex addicts is unthinkable in such a small town. Being seen in the act of going to such a group even supposing there was one, would be enough of a scandal in itself. In retrospect, I learned more than just academic subjects from Mr. Smart. I learned that recovery from a crisis, the "bottom" of an addiction is possible. It's a shame Mr. Smart had to recover on his own. I'm lucky to have had so much help in an environment which supports the very idea of mental recovery from addiction. There are, I believe, twenty-two twelve-step programs, based on Alcoholics Anonymous, for recovery from addiction. My first addiction was to romance. This was triggered for the first time by an extraordinary man, one John Clapham, my high school German teacher.

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